

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07  
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15  
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/082 W

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R 041430Z MAY 77  
FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6656

C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 3101

E.O.11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINT ELAB TS  
SUBJECT: MAY DAY IN TUNISIA

REF: TUNIS 2395

1. SUMMARY: LABOR DAY CELEBRATIONS IN TUNISIA WERE LOW KEY, LIMITED TO TRADE UNION OBSERVANCE WITHOUT HIGH LEVEL PARTICIPATION BY GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS. TRADE UNION LEADER HABIB ACHOUR'S MAY DAY SPEECH EMPHASIZED NEED FOR INCREASING WAGES BUT ALSO HINTED THAT UGTT WILL PLAY ACTIVE ROLE IN CRITICIZING BAD MANAGEMENT AS FACTOR LIMITING INCREASED PRODUCTIVITY. PRIME MINISTER NOUIRA, SPEAKING AT PARTY MEETING OVER MAY DAY WEEKEND, CRITICIZED WORKERS WHO CONSTANTLY SEEK WAGE INCREMENTS. END SUMMARY.

2. MAY DAY 1977 IN TUNISIA WAS CELEBRATED ON A VERY LOW KEY. TORCH LIGHT PARADE OF WORKERS WAS HELD IN TUNIS EVENING OF APRIL 30 AND FINISHED WITH LAYING OF WREATH ON TOMB OF LABOR'S HERO/MARTYR FARHAT HACHED. ON MAY DAY, UGTT SECRETARY GENERAL HABIB ACHOUR PRESIDED OVER A PUBLIC MEETING IN TUNIS, JOINED BY GOVERNOR OF TUNIS KACEM BOUSNINA AND SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE PSD TUNIS COORDINATING COMMITTEE ABDELKRIM AZAIEZ. IN HIS  
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SPEECH, ACHOUR REVIEWED THE UGTT'S CONTRIBUTION TO TUNISIA'S INDEPENDENCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND RESTATED THE UGTT'S SUPPORT FOR THE JANUARY 19 "SOCIAL COMPACT." REFERRING TO THE TERMS OF THE COMPACT THAT CALL FOR INCREASING PRODUCTIVITY, ACHOUR SAID THAT WORKERS FULLY SUPPORT THESE GOALS, ESPECIALLY WHEN THE GOVERNMENT GUARANTEES WAGE INCREASES TO REWARD THEM FOR THEIR

EFFORTS. ACHOUR ALSO DISCUSSED MANAGEMENT OF ENTERPRISES AND SAID THAT IT IS A "NATIONAL DUTY" TO EXAMINE MANAGEMENT'S EFFICIENCY CLOSELY AND TO CRITICIZE INADEQUATE PERFORMANCE. HE CLAIMED THAT TUNISIAN WORKERS HAVE DEMONSTRATED THAT THEY CAN ATTAIN THE PRODUCTIVITY LEVELS OF EUROPEAN AND AMERICAN WORKERS UNDER PROPER CIRCUMSTANCES.

2. WHILE NO CABINET LEVEL GOT OFFICIAL PARTICIPATED IN MAY DAY OBSERVANCE IN TUNIS, PRIME MINISTER NOUIRA ADDRESSED HIMSELF TO ROLE OF LABOR IN SOCIETY IN SPEECH HE HAVE OVER WEEKEND TO A PSD PARTY CELL MEETING IN KSAR HELLAL (NEAR MONASTIR IN THE SAHEL). HE DEFENDED THE GOT'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT POLICIES OVER THE PAST SEVEN YEARS AND ESPECIALLY THE MECHANISM WHICH HAVE BEEN ESTABLISHED FOR NEGOTIATION OF WAGES AND WORK RULES AND FOR THE SETTLEMENT OF DISPUTES. HE COUNSELLED WORKERS TO CHANNEL THEIR DEMANDS THROUGH THESE MECHANISMS AND CRITICIZED "CERTAIN ELEMENTS OF THE MASSES" THAT CONSTANTLY DEMAND WAGE INCREASES WITHOUT REFERENCE TO ESTABLISHED AGREEMENTS OR OTHER ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS. NEITHER THE ECONOMY NOR BUSINESS MANAGERS CAN PUT UP WITH A PERMANENT RE-POSING OF THE SALARY QUESTION. DISCUSSIONS OF SALARY ARE SCHEDULED, NOUIRA SAID, BUT IN THE MEANTIME IT IS ESSENTIAL TO ADDRESS OURSELVES "FIERCELY" TO THE ISSUE OF PRODUCTIVITY.

3. GOT PARTICIPATION IN MAY DAY WAS AT ITS LOWEST LEVEL IN RECENT YEARS. IN 1976 MINISTER OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS MOHAMED ENNACEUR REPRESENTED GOT AT MAY DAY CELEBRATIONS  
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IN NABEUL WHILE IN 1975 AND 1974 PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA HIMSELF PARTICIPATED ACTIVELY IN CELEBRATIONS HELD IN SFAX AND TUNIS. MAY DAY IN TUNISIA HAS VIRTUALLY CEASED TO BE AN OCCASION FOR ANNOUNCING A NEW WORKER BENEFIT AND WITH THE 33 P/C INCREASE IN THE MINIMUM WAGE DECREED IN JANUARY UNDER THE "SOCIAL COMPACT," NOTHING WAS EXPECTED NOW. WITH THE PSD CALLING ITS POLICY SOCIALIST, HOWEVER, IT IS NOTEWORTHY THAT NO SENIOR PARTY OR GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL PARTICIPATED.

4. MORE SIGNIFICANT, HOWEVER, IS THE APPARENT STANDOFF BETWEEN ACHOUR AND NOUIRA ON THE QUESTION OF WAGES AND PRODUCTIVITY. HAVING CONCEDED A MAJOR WAGE INCREASE IN JANUARY, NOUIRA IS NOW LOOKING FOR THE INCREASED WORKER PRODUCTIVITY THAT THE UGTT COMMITTED ITSELF TO SUPPORT. ACHOUR APPEARS TO BE TELLING THE GOVERNMENT THAT THE WORKERS HAVE ALREADY INCREASED PRODUCTIVITY AND THAT FURTHER GAINS ARE BEING BLOCKED BY BAD MANAGEMENT. HE ALSO APPEARS TO BE HINTING THAT HE CAN AND WILL EXPOSE

INSTANCES OF BAD MANAGEMENT TO PROVE HIS POINT. DRAWING  
ON THE EXPERIENCE OF THE STATE LANDS DISPUTE OF LATE  
1976 (SEE TUNIS A-141, DEC 29, 1976), ACHOUR MAY BELIEVE  
AS WELL THAT HE CAN BEST KEEP UP HIS MOMENTUM BY STAYING  
ON THE OFFENSIVE WITH CRITICISM OF BAD MANAGEMENT.

5. THE APPARENT NOUIRA-ACHOUR STANDOFF DIES NOT STRIKE  
US AS A SERIOUS HEATING UP OF RELATIONS BETWEEN THE  
GOVERNMENT AND THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT BUT RATHER AS A  
CONTINUATION OF DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TWO OVER QUESTIONS  
OF WAGES AND PRODUCTIVITY. FOR THE MOMENT, THIS APPEARS  
TO BE A NORMAL AND HEALTHY PROCESS AND INDICATIVE OF THE  
INDEPENDENT ROLE PLAYED BY THE UGTT IN NATIONAL POLITICS.  
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## Message Attributes

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